

RUTLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Quarterly

VOLUME XXV No. 1

1995

Band of Brothers: Philip, Louis and Bertram Brehmer

"My Old Green Mountain Home."

5

CENTRAL RANGE OF THE GREEN MOUNTAINS, SHOWING PICO, KILLINGTON AND SHREWSBURY.

SONG AND CHORUS

Words by.....
Margaret Holmes Francis

Music by.....
John Harry Engels

High Voice Low Voice

PUBLISHERS BREHMER BROS RUTLAND, VT.

Band of Brothers: Philip, Louis and Bertram Brehmer

by Jean Brehmer Swain

About the Author

Jean Brehmer Swain is a granddaughter of Philip H. Brehmer. Her lifelong interest in music began under his affectionate and sympathetic guidance. He encouraged her parents to provide her with piano lessons at an early age, and he presented her with her first piano. One of the bright memories of her childhood was the occasion when her grandfather took her to her first opera, Verdi's *Rigoletto*, sung in Italian, at the Rutland Playhouse on Center Street. She dedicates this piece to his memory.

Acknowledgements

The following institutions are acknowledged for their assistance: Castleton Historical Society, Marble Bank, Proctor Free Library, Rutland Area Cultural Alliance, Rutland Free Library, *Rutland Herald*, Rutland Historical Society, University of Vermont Bailey-Howe Library, Vermont Council on the Humanities, Vermont Historical Society and the Vermont Marble Company Museum.

The following individuals likewise provided important assistance: Michael Aleshire, Grace Anderson, William Bartlett, Bartlett Studio staff, Patricia Bellany, Don Blades, Eleanor Webster Bradley, Raymond Catozzi, Dennis Charles, Howard Coffin, Ann Czar, James Deering, Robert Franzoni, Matt Freeman, Virginia Hyland, Robert Kenney, Rita Lane, Helen Lawrence, Ann Lurvey, Mrs. Cyril Manney, Audrey Murdock, Jim McRae, Esther Sevigny, Willard A. Squier, Millie Steingress, and Margaret Thomas.

Cover Note

This appropriately titled sheet music cover illustrates the close working relationship of the Brehmer brothers: two of whom (Philip and Bert) were the publishers and the third (Louis) who provided the scenic photography. [Margaret Holmes Francisco was the wife of a Rutland insurance agent. John Harry Engals (sometimes spelled Engels) was the organist at the Congregational Church in Rutland.]

BREHMER: a surname of Germanic origin, no longer extant in Rutland but carried here for over seventy years by the members of four generations beginning about 1880. It was pronounced "Bremmer" by its owners, and by others, variously and inaccurately, "Breemer" or "Braymer". This random and sometimes heedless mispronunciation of their patronymic was not an uncommon experience among European immigrants in the last half of the 19th century. And the first Brehmer in Rutland was indeed an immigrant, one of the thousands who came crowding out of the Old World into the New before the beginning of the 20th Century.

Louis P. (probably for Philip) Brehmer was born in 1832 near Salzburg in Alsace-Lorraine. He emigrated from his home to the United States, probably alone, in 1852. No family records exist to show what port he sailed from or where he landed in this country. Why he came is another mystery. But perhaps this is not so mysterious in view of the social and political discord and violence that rocked many European governments and their subjects at that time. The year 1848 had been a year of revolution, of rising expectations among the middle and lower classes in Germany, Austria and northern Italy, all countries impinging upon Brehmer's Alsatian homeland. When he left Alsace-Lorraine, it belonged to France. By the time he died in Rutland in 1897, his native territory had fallen to Germany in the 1870-71 Franco-Prussian War.

Then, too, there is a family story, impossible to verify, that the 20-year-old Louis while serving at the altar in his church—probably Lutheran—had damaged a costly altar piece and in fright had run away and shipped out to take refuge abroad and start a new life.

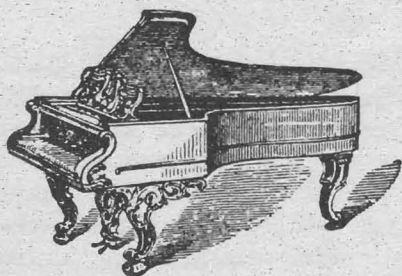
The details of that life from then on are found, ironically, to a large degree in his death notice. According to his obituary, which ran in the *Rutland Herald* on 9 October 1897, he had come to Rutland "about 16 years ago". He was a member of the Congregational Church and "well-known here". He was survived by "a wife; three sons, Philip, Louis and Burt [sic]". (His only grandchild, five-year-old Carl, son of Philip and Lillian Davis Brehmer, the author's father, was not mentioned.) On 11 October Louis P. Brehmer was buried in Evergreen Cemetery.

How and why did Louis make his way to Rutland with his wife and family almost 30 years after coming to this country? Somehow, probably on scanty funds and speaking no English, and doing who knows what kind of work to support himself, Louis P. Brehmer had first made his way to western New York State and there met and married Salome Reifsteck who was born in 1835 in Potter, N.Y., of German extraction—"Pennsylvania Dutch". To them were born: Philip Henry in 1856 in Buffalo, Louis Frederick in 1868 in Tonawanda and Bertram August in 1880 in Penn Yan. A fourth son, William Edward, was born in 1863 somewhere in New York State. He died quickly of an unidentified fever at age 19 in Rutland in 1883. Were other children born elsewhere, dying before the family got here? No records exist to provide an answer.

Louis P. Brehmer moved to Rutland with his wife and family almost 30 years after arriving in the United States. An exact date of arrival in Rutland is elusive but the Rutland Directory for 1884-5 lists a Lewis [sic] P. Brehmer at 79 Main Street. He is listed as a music teacher. In the 1886-7 Directory Louis P. has a house at 24 North Main Street where also live Louis F., a musician, and Philip H., also a musician. (Bert is still too young to be listed and wives were not listed at that time.)

BREHMER'S MUSIC STORE.

69 CENTRE STREET, RUTLAND, VT.



Complete Line of
Sheet Music and Books.

*Musical Merchandise of
Every Description.*

Agency for the Matchless

**SMITH AMERICAN
ORGANS AND PIANOS.**

A Specialty is Made of 5 Cent Music and Violin Strings.

 Send for Catalogue—Free. Pianos and Organs tuned and repaired.

Rutland Cornet Band,

P. H. BREHMER, Conductor and Bus. Man'r.

First Class Uniforms. Latest Music.

BREHMER ORCHESTRA,

PHIL. H. BREHMER, Leader.

ED. KANE, Treasurer.

Engagements taken for

BALLS, CONCERTS, PARTIES, &c.. &c.

The Most Complete Orchestra in the State. Press notices furnished on application.

Phil H. Brehmer, 1st violin; Homo Francisco, 1st violin; Godfried Surmann, 2nd violin; S. Brock, violin; Fillmore Piersons, bass; Louis F. Brehmer, flute; Carl Russman, clarionet; C. M. Cobb, clarionet; Ed. Kane, cornet; Con. Collins, cornet; Chas. Jones, trombone; Erving Mandeville, horn; C. A. Johnson, horn; Chas. Young, drum.

Office: 69 Center Street.

In the 1886-7 Directory, a full-page advertisement on page two called attention to "Brehmer's Music Store, 69 Centre [sic] Street, Complete Line of Sheet Music and Books, Agency for the matchless Smith Organs and Pianos. A Specialty is made of 5 Cent Music and Violin Strings. Pianos and Organs tuned and repaired". In addition, the lower half of the advertisement promoted the Rutland Cornet Band, with P. H. Brehmer listed as conductor. The Cornet Band had "First Class Uniforms" and the "Latest Music". And, finally, the advertisement promoted "Brehmer's Orchestra. Phil. H. Brehmer, Leader; Ed. Kane, Treasurer; Balls, Concerts, Parties, etc., etc.". In this ensemble, Phil. H. Brehmer and H. Francisco played 1st violin; Louis F. Brehmer, flute; Erving Mandeville, horn; and Chas. Young, drum.

For the next two decades Rutland Directories carried advertisements for what appears to be a growing business at various addresses on Center Street. In 1889-90, Phil. H. Brehmer, Teacher of Music and Piano Tuner had an office at E. White's Jewelry Store at 15 Center Street. His residence was at 24 North Main Street. He was listed as the leader and manager of the Opera House Orchestra. In 1891-2 he, his father, and his brother Louis were in the jewelry business at 58 Center Street. Brehmer's Orchestra was still the Opera House Orchestra.

In 1888 Philip married Lillian Davis, whom he always called "Kitty". They lived at 79 Grove Street. In 1891 their son, Carl, was born there. He was destined to be the only member of the next generation of Brehmers to survive infancy. Carl's interests ran to civil engineering rather than music. He died in 1952.

By 1897 Brehmer Brothers had moved their music and jewelry store around the corner to Merchants Row. The day after their father's funeral, they sold their jewelry stock to Russell W. Parish, who occupied half the store. The Brehmers would "retain their music business and also devote their attention to the development of a newly patented organ pedal for pianos". It is not known who invented this pedal.

In 1895, Bert Brehmer's name appears in the Rutland City Directory for the first time as a jeweler. It must have been about this time that Louis F. Brehmer started withdrawing from that business to pursue an interest in photography, which was to become his profession for the rest of his long life.

In his obituary, which appeared in the *Rutland Herald* on 29 December 1949, it is stated that he sold his interest in the jewelry and music business to Philip in 1903 and studied photography in Albany for a year. Returning to Rutland, he married Eleanor Webster and set up housekeeping at 45 Prospect Street. He opened his own photographic studio on Center Street. In 1907 he moved to the "newly constructed" Hulett Block on Merchants Row where he maintained operations until his retirement in the late 1940s. At that time he was referred to as "probably Rutland's oldest merchant".

Louis F. Brehmer had taken up photography several years before establishing his own business. One of his first commercial photographs may be a scene on Merchants Row after the famous blizzard of 1888. This could have been taken while he was apprenticed to C. W. Nichols, who was then one of Rutland's leading photographers.



A scene of Merchants Row probably photographed by Louis F. Brehmer in the aftermath of the "Blizzard of 1888".

In the ensuing years, before going to Albany to study, Louis F. Brehmer had already begun to expand his field of photographic subjects. He began a long concentration on Vermont scenery and wildlife which produced an impressive variety of work. His output ranged from a number of panoramic views of the mountain range east of Rutland (some of which can still be seen in the Mendon Town Office) to a closeup of a baby porcupine (which he called a hedgehog) struggling to climb a tree. How this man, small in stature, wearing heavy-lensed eyeglasses, mild and soft-spoken, managed to get to the top of Deer's Leap in Mendon to take a long vertical shot of the Green Mountain Clubhouse, down on the road through Sherburne Pass, is indeed a mystery.



A shot of the Green Mountain Clubhouse taken from the top of Deer's Leap.



A baby porcupine and an owl are charming examples of L. F. Brehmer's nature photography.

William Bartlett, retired Rutland photographer and proprietor of Bartlett's Photography Studio, gives an illuminating account of how Louis F. Brehmer established his studio in 1907. The new Hulett Block had just been rebuilt following the horrendous downtown fire of February 1906. (Louis recorded the ruins of this fire in a photograph that shows the corner of Merchants Row and Center Street looking like London after a World War II bombing.) According to Bartlett, when Louis moved into the top floor of the restored building, he specified the installation of a large skylight in the roof to provide him with good north light for portrait work. At that time it was an example of "advanced technique", says Bartlett, and not yet in general use.



Corner of Merchants Row and Center Street following the devastating fire of 1906.

The camera he used most, Bartlett says, was a large Eastman Portrait camera, with which 8 × 10 inch plates could be used as well as 5 × 7 inch plates. The plates used were glass plates until celluloid-based film took over in the 20th Century. The celluloid-based film was much lighter and easier to handle. [Space does not permit inclusion of further technical detail provided by Bartlett as well as helpful explanations provided by Rutland photographer, Michael Aleshire.] Bartlett concludes by saying, "Experience and the ability to read the value of light made the professional photographer at that time." According to Bartlett, this ability and skill made it possible for Louis F. Brehmer "to achieve the success he enjoyed in Rutland".

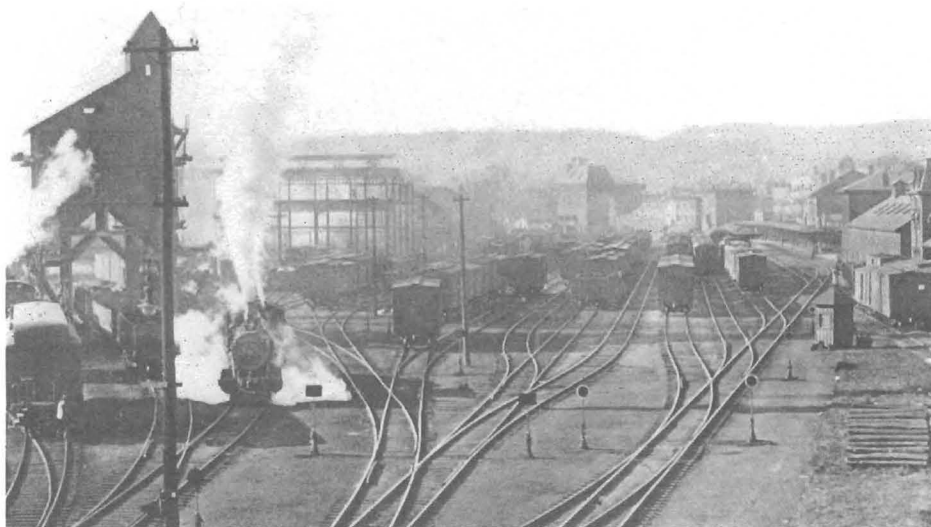
At some point before the end of the 1890s, Louis F. Brehmer and his brother, Philip, joined forces in yet another enterprise which has left a valuable pictorial record to the community. For over 20 years as publishers, the Brehmer Brothers produced more than a dozen books featuring photographs of scenery, mostly in the Otter Creek Valley. Their subjects included local businesses and industries including marble quarries, factories, the Rutland Railroad, downtown commercial buildings, and other promotional material. Many of their books included photographs of some of the elegant homes of well-established local families. Louis F. Brehmer illustrated a calendar with views around the estate of Julia C. R. Dorr which were accompanied by quotations from her poetry.



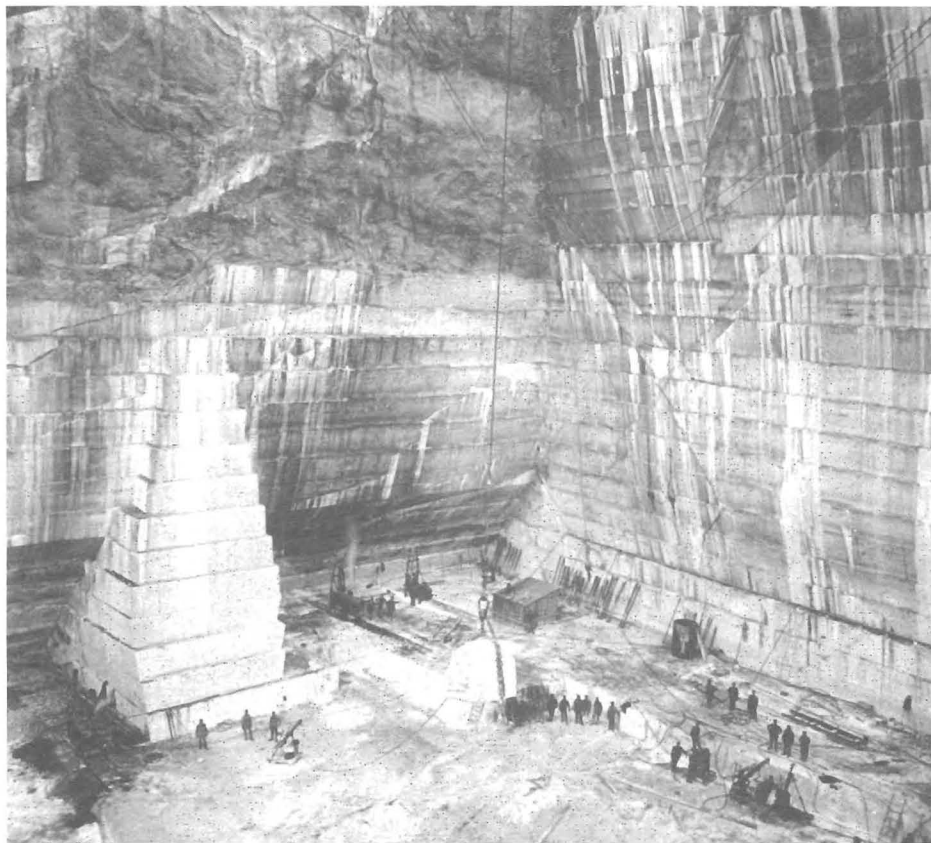
A pastoral view of Otter Creek and Rutland's eastern mountains.



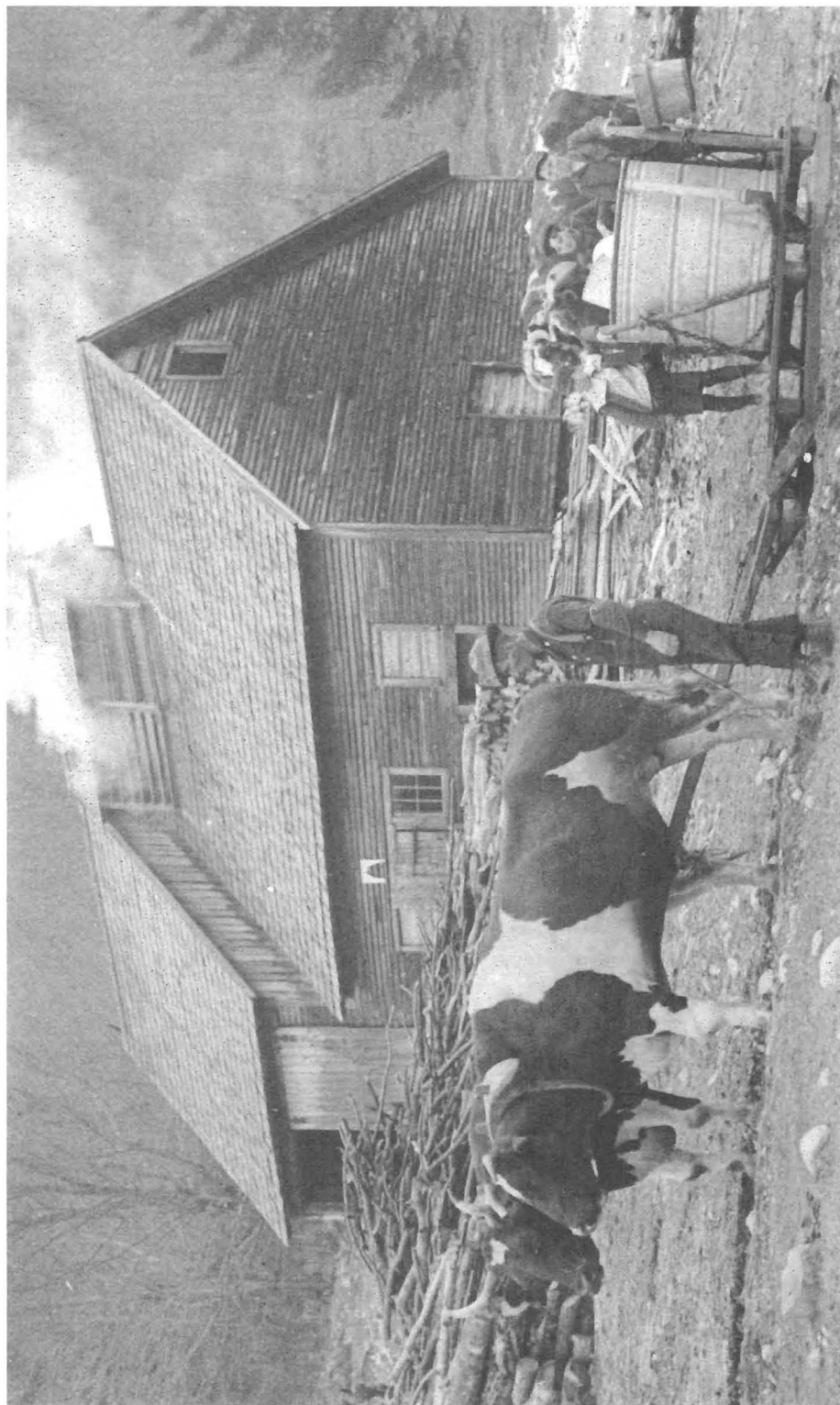
The corner of Cottage and West Streets in 1911. The W.Y.W. Ripley house is at right.



Rutland's busy railroad yards.



Men at work in the Sutherland Falls Quarry.



Vermont scene at sugaring time.



Workmen at Center Rutland falls below the railroad bridge.



BRIDGE ABOVE "THE MAPLES."

But under these embowering trees,
Lulled by the hum of droning bees,
The quiet river seems to sleep,
So calm its rest is and so deep.

Yonder, beside the old gray bridge,
From which the path climbs yonder ridge,
The lazy cattle seek the shade
By the umbrageous willows made.

J. C. R. D.

1925 JANUARY 1925						
SUN.	MON.	TUE.	WED.	THU.	FRI.	SAT.
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

Poetry by Julia C. R. Dorr and a Brehmer photo of Dorr Bridge near the poet's home
decorate a calendar reprinted by the Rutland Historical Society in 1975.



A 1922 winter outing of the Green Mountain Club.



Children pause near the banks of Otter Creek on their way to school.

While the Brehmer Brothers published a number of albums showing the natural beauty of the Rutland area, perhaps their most outstanding work came in the production of *Historical Rutland* in 1911 to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the establishment of Rutland, whose royal charter was granted in 1761.

In the following year, Louis F. Brehmer's photographs illustrated an ambitious booklet advertising "The Industries, Resources, and Beauties of Vermont's Leading City", published by the Rutland Businessmen's Association.

The Brehmer Brothers also published sheet music. Some of this included compositions by Philip H. Brehmer. [A partial list of their publications can be found at the end of this article.]

At the same time, Philip H. Brehmer, now in partnership with his brother Bert, was carrying on the music business, which eventually found a permanent location on the second floor above the Woolworth Store on Merchants Row. Here they sold pianos, violins and other instruments. They also sold sheet music and phonograph records ranging from Bach and the classics to the latest Broadway hit songs. From here Philip would go down the street to catch a train to small down-country towns to tune little church organs. He also tuned many city church organs. Both Bert and Philip were organists at the Rutland Baptist Church at various times even though Philip was a member of the Trinity Episcopal Church. Bert, a Baptist, was organist and choir director at Trinity Episcopal Church in 1918 and 1919.

In 1907 Bert married Carrie Heath, who, like him, was a piano teacher. They lived on North Main Street at the corner of High Street for many years. Philip and Kitty built a house on a double lot at 94 North Main Street. [Today this is the last remaining private residence on that block.] Louis F. Brehmer and his wife also built a house, at 9 Temple Street. Thus the three brothers and their families were almost literally within a stone's throw of one another. That closeness prevailed in their private lives as well as their professional ones.

As early as 1884 Brehmer's Music Store had advertised on the first page of the program booklet for a three-day community music festival in Rutland. Such festivals were popular in the days before movies, radio and television came along. Philip H. Brehmer, in particular, was a great supporter of local musical programs and performances. He may, in fact, have organized the first formal orchestra to make its permanent home in Rutland. In 1901 Philip H. and Louis F. Brehmer were orchestra members at the performances of the Rutland Choral Association which were conducted by J. Harry Engals. Early in the 1890s, the Brehmer Orchestra performed at a benefit at the newly organized St. Paul's Universalist Church. Philip also organized an orchestra which played in the "pit" when silent movies arrived in town.

About 1910, Philip became the leader of the Rutland City Band. He is captured on movie film performing at the 1914 Rutland Fair. In 1895 he wrote the "R.E.C.I. March", subtitled "The Favorite Two-step of the Day". This song celebrated the Rutland English and Classical Institute which was located in the former Strong mansion on South Main Street.



A view of the Temple Street neighborhood where the three Brehmer families lived in the early 1900s.



Louis' and Eleanor's living room, 45 Prospect Street.



Atop Killington Peak. Louis' wife Eleanor (third from r); Bert's wife, Carrie (third from l).



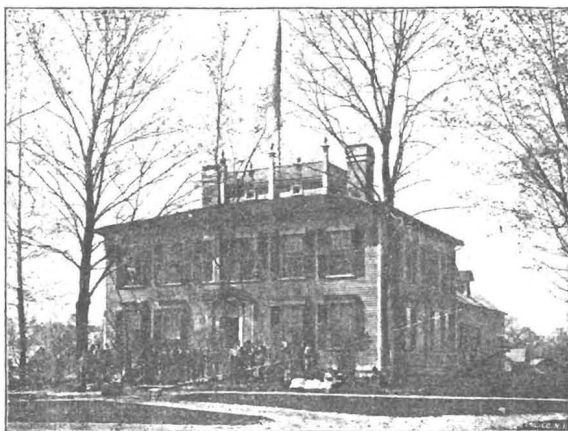
Rutland City Band 1912. Front row (l-r) A. J. Burdick, O. C. Ballou, DeLonge, Bill Stickney, A. Catozzi, C. Collins, leader Phil Brehmer, R. F. Crawford, Frank Hinchey, J. C. Cox. Second row (l-r) C. Young, J. Reille, D. Romano, J. Seff, R. H. Hughes, J. MacDowell, H. A. Preville, C. Bliss, A. Sanders, W. Skeels.

THE FAVORITE "TWO-STEP" OF THE DAY.

R. E. C. I.

MARCH.

Published for Orchestra and
Band.



Danced in the leading Dancing
Academies.

ORCHESTRA
8

RUTLAND ENGLISH AND CLASSICAL INSTITUTE.

PIANO
4

— BY —

PHIL H. BREHMER.

RUTLAND, VT.,
BREHMER BROTHERS,
PUBLISHERS.

JAMES CARRUTHERS, PRINTER, RUTLAND, VT.

G. L. MITH,
600 MAIN ST.,
PENNINGTON, - VT.

March written by Phil Brehmer and published by Brehmer Brothers.



Philip standing in washed-out road bed 1920.

Philip H. Brehmer died in July 1934. His brother Bert eventually moved the music business to his home on North Main Street and then to Mendon, where he exercised his long-time skill at picture framing and cabinet-work. Louis F. Brehmer died in 1949. Bert died in 1963. Their wives did not long survive them.

These men, sons of a poor immigrant from Alsace-Lorraine, did not become captains of local industry. They did not own banks or railroads or marble quarries. But during their time here, they touched the lives of countless people, quietly, unobtrusively, gently, in ways those people may not have realized.

Bernard Holland in the *New York Times* of 25 December 1994 says, "The piano was the Romantic Era's television set. Sheet music . . . was its software." To this he might have added the family photograph album and the stereoscope whose magic moved simple photographs into three dimensions, another speciality of Louis F. Brehmer. When home entertainment was a quiet, simple, family-centered affair in its truest sense, the Brehmer brothers brought it to the people of their town and time in picture and sound.

And their efforts are still productive. On the following page two recent publications are shown which utilize Louis F. Brehmer's photographs to illustrate another time. Some of his postcard views have been used by a local author to illustrate a recent book about early days in Pittsford. On a living room wall in Mendon hangs a Louis F. Brehmer photograph of a birch grove, enclosed by Bert in a handsome frame made of bark. Its current owner says she has already willed it to one of her children.



Louis and Eleanor at home, 9 Temple Street. Picture on wall at left has decorative frame fashioned by brother Bert.



Two recent publications utilizing historic Brehmer photographs. [Children in front of Green Mountain Boy statue are John A. M. Hinsman and Catherine L. Boyden.]

And of Philip H. Brehmer, the *Rutland Herald's* comment on his death, probably written by his old friend Howard Hindley, had this to say: "It takes thrift, industry, and an exemplary patience to make a living out of music. Phil had all that, and good will too, as citizen, churchman, and lodge brother. Hundreds of folks who seldom get on the front page will mourn with his family."

So closes the story of the Brehmers in Rutland, those three kind, gentle men, that band of brothers.

Publications

- "Rutland, Vermont, Heart of the Green Mountains", photographs by L. F. Brehmer, Rutland Railroad Company Souvenir Edition, 1897.
- "Beautiful Rutland", by L. F. Brehmer, published by Brehmer Brothers, 1899.
- "Manchester-in-the-Mountains, Manchester, Vermont", photographs by L. F. Brehmer, published by Brehmer Brothers, 1899.
- "Nature Studies in the Rutland Valley", photographs by L. F. Brehmer, published by Brehmer Brothers, 1899.
- "Churches of Rutland", with illustrations and historical sketches, published by Brehmer Brothers, 1900.
- "Rutland Homes", Residences in Rutland City, Vermont, published by Brehmer Brothers, 1900.
- "The Rutland Art Book", Containing Reproductions from Fifteen Original Photographs by L. F. Brehmer Taken with a Bausch and Lomb Plastic Lens, copyright, L. F. Brehmer, published by P. H. Brehmer, 1903.
- "Rutland, the Gateway of the Green Mountains", reproductions of photographs by L. F. Brehmer taken with a Bausch and Lomb Zeiss lens, copyright and published by L. F. Brehmer, The Tuttle Company, printers, 1909.
- "Historical Rutland", an illustrated history of Rutland from the granting of the charter in 1761 to 1911, reproductions and original photographs by L. F. Brehmer; press matter written and compiled by Rev. F. E. Davidson, published by Phil. H. Brehmer, The Tuttle Company, printers, 1911.
- "Rutland, Vermont in the Heart of the Green Mountains", an Illustrated Booklet of the Industries, Resources and Beauties of Vermont's Leading City, published by the Rutland Business Men's Association, photographs by L. F. Brehmer, letterpress by C. H. Wardwell, published by The Tuttle Company, c. 1912.

Sheet Music

- "R.E.C.I. March", for Orchestra and Band, by Phil H. Brehmer, copyright 1895, published by Brehmer Brothers.
- "My Old Green Mountain Home", Words by Margaret Holmes Francisco, Music by John Harry Engels [sic], published by Brehmer Brothers, copyright 1901 by Phil H. Brehmer.
- "Rutland School March", dedicated to the pupils of the Rutland Public Schools, by Eugene Speyer, published by Phillip [sic] H. Brehmer, c. 1903.

RUTLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY
96 CENTER STREET, RUTLAND, VERMONT 05701-4023
(802) 775-2006

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Please send any address change on Postal Service Form 3576 (a postcard freely available at your local post office).

Annual Meeting is held at 7:30 p.m. on the third Thursday of October.

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	Sponsoring—\$50.00	Regular—\$10.00
	Business—\$125.00	Senior Citizens
	Students	(62 & up)—\$8.00
	(18 & under)—\$8.00	

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Advance payment for 2 or 3 years is welcome, helping to reduce costs.

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Rutland, VT 05701-4023

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Co-Editors: James S. Davidson and Elaine G. Purdy
Managing Editor: Elaine G. Purdy

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ISSN 0748-2493

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